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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in perceptions and values between Canadian and American television audiences. Respondents were first and second year college university students at the University of Windsor, Ontario, and Canisius College, Buffalo. Two types of personal values were looked at: general conceptions of good and desirable goals (terminal) and standards by which actions should be evaluated (instrumental). Respondents were asked to arrange 18 terminal values and 18 instrumental values in order of importance to themselves and then view both a 5-minute scene extracted from a Cosby Show and a 30-second Oldsmobile commercial. After viewing the audiovisual stimulus, respondents were then asked to mark whether they saw specific terminal and instrumental values supported by the content. Students were asked questions about media behavior, cultural identity, and perception of TV's impact on culture. Results indicated self-rated personal values of Canadian and American college students were strikingly similar. These similar personal values lead to similar media behavior, perceptions of values in TV entertainment programming and advertising, and ways of rationalizing TV's negative impact on culture and personal relations. Results suggest that U.S. media domination can not be rejected as an agent playing a role in Canadian acculturation. (Fourteen tables of data are included and 19 references are attached.) (MG)

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CANADIAN AND U.S. PERCEPTIONS OF TV VALUES: Cultural Freedom or Domination?

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Canadian and U.S. Perceptions of TV Values:
Cultural Freedom or Domination?

The similarities in culture between Canada and the United States seem striking. The two neighbors share language (to a large degree), ecology, urbanization, political conditions, economic and work conditions and immigration histories (Curtis and Lambert, 1980). Less similar, perhaps, are the "components of culture"--attitudes, beliefs, norms, values, status--that many scholars, writers, politicians and residents on both sides of the border believe are substantially different.

Since the 1960s, in a series of works, Seymour Martin Lipset, a sociologist who has resided at universities in Canada and the United States, emphasized the distinctiveness of each country's values. Lipset (1985) and others (Naegele, 1968 and Clark, 1976) have posited that Canadians are more conservative, more traditional, more collectively-oriented, more law-abiding, more elitist, but less achievement-oriented, less individualistic, less optimistic, have less faith in the future, are less willing to risk (capital or reputation), exercise greater caution, reserve and restraint, are less religious and less moralistic.

There are serious concerns among many Canadians that these presumed differences are being lessened as Canadian culture is being usurped through the "Trojan horse" of United States mass media. However, these concerns are still based upon two impressionistic assumptions: there are significant differences in

values and that these differences are, in effect, being sanded away by U.S. mass media.

The empirical literature on value differences is slim and inconclusive; however, empirical U.S. media effects literature reveals an impact on Canadian cognitions (e.g., knowledge of U.S. public affairs), but is inconclusive concerning U.S. media effects on attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, etc. Overall, only limited effects have been demonstrated.

Relevant Empirical Literature--Value Differences

One of the first empirical studies exploring cross-national differences in values (Arnold and Tigert, 1974) rejected some of the expected differences and supported others. Arnold and Tigert found that Canadians do not appear more conservative than Americans, that Canadians are, in fact, more favorably disposed to changes in traditional values than Americans, that Americans do not appear more optimistic than Canadians and that Canadians didn't show more concern over security and personal well-being than Americans. However, the empirical study concurred in several areas with expected differences. Arnold and Tigert found Americans are more independent and confident than Canadians, Canadians are more conservative with respect to the use of credit, and Americans show a higher moral conservatism.

Tate and Surlin (1976) surveyed random samples of adults in Saskatoon, Sask., and Athens, Ga., concerning the TV program "All in the Family", and found Canadian adults had an understanding

and perception of the show's humor and realism that was different than American adults.

They reasoned that this was due to cultural differences. At the time, Saskatoon did not have cable TV service.

In surveys conducted in Oregon and Ontario, Crawford and Curtis (1979) similarly found support for some expected value differences and little support for others. They found empirical support for the view that Americans are higher in achievement and elitism values but rejected the expected view that Canadians hold more traditional views and are more collectively-oriented.

In a study by researchers at two Canadian and two United States universities, no significant differences in political ideals were found between Canadians and Americans (Sniderman, Fletcher, Russell and Tetlock, 1988.) Researchers studied six value dimensions and five appeared to show little difference. Two concerned "police powers" in the two countries and the remainder support "liberty/freedom of expression."

Relevant Empirical Literature--Media Effects on Cognitions and Attitudes

In an early study of U.S. media effects, Beattie (1967) surveyed freshmen at 11 Canadian universities and found students scored higher on knowledge of American persons and events than on knowledge of Canadian public affairs. He concluded that, to some extent, U.S. media influence works against Canadian identity.

Skipper (1975) examined the impact of American media on

Canadian college students' musical tastes. He found few differences between musical preferences of Canadian and American samples. Winter (1985) examined the radio listening habits of Canadian youths and found, in the Windsor area, not only a preference for American music but a general ignorance of Canadian artists.

Sparkes (1977) found no difference in social-political attitudes held by Canadians irrespective of whether they solely watched U.S. or Canadian television programs. Based on his study and the impression gained from previous cross-cultural studies, Sparkes concluded that there were very little, if any, attitudinal differences or effects associated with watching foreign television signals.

In one of the stronger findings of effects, Barnett and McPhail (1980) found that the more Canadians watched American television, the less Canadian they feel. Baer and Winter (1983) found that viewership of American television news leads to Anti-Canadian government attitudes by Canadians, but the viewing of Canadian television news doesn't have the same effect.

Tate and Trach (1980) concluded that knowledge of the Canadian legal process was diminished by reliance on US television legal depictions. Payne and Caron (1982), in a study in Quebec, found that the availability of Anglophone media affected knowledge variables and, to a lesser extent, some attitudinal variables.

Social background and interpersonal behavior were stronger

predictors of attitude and information acquisition than media exposure, according to later research by Payne and Caron (1983). Although media exposure was found to be an important predictor of some cultural variables, no substantial evidence was found for broad-based media imperialism.

Hypothesis

Cultural-laden values are embedded in media content. By studying audience decoding of values perceived in the media, one should be able to discern a profile of personal values held by members of that audience which parallel values perceptually embedded in the media. This is the central premise of this research.

American media, which most Canadians view over their own Canadian fare (Siegel, 1983), may have acculturated Canadians to the extent that Canadian and American values are similar. Through this process of media domination, personal and cultural differences are said to become homogenized. If this is the case, an empirical study should demonstrate similar personal values in members of both countries as well as similarities in perceiving media content values. On the other hand, those who adopt a uses and gratification approach, believe a process of negotiation is going on in the media decoding process as intervening variables shape the message to fit the characteristics of the receiver. In such a scenario, personal values and perceptual differences would

be maintained by Canadian and American audiences.

It is hypothesized that if no significant difference in perceptions and values between the two samples are found, then media domination, as one possible cause for homogenization could not be ruled out. If there are significant perceptual and personal value differences, than a uses/gratification explanation could not be rejected.

Methods

Respondents were a convenience sample of college/university students at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, and Canisius College, Buffalo. First and second-year students were used and an attempt was made to keep sample sizes in a near-equal range. Also, data were collected within several months at both campuses (late 1986). The two test sites are subject to significant penetration of the other country's media. Windsor receives Detroit newspapers and broadcast signals while Buffalo receives Toronto newspapers and broadcast signals.

Two types of personal values are being looked at. The first are general conceptions of what is good and desirable goals, ends for which people should strive. The second are standards by which actions, usually in pursuit of the goals, should be evaluated (Curtis and Lambert, 1980). Rokeach (1973) calls the two posited type of values "terminal" (for example, "a comfortable life") and "instrumental" (for example, "ambition"), respectively.

First, respondents were asked to arrange 18 terminal values and 18 instrumental values in order of importance to themselves, as guiding principles of their lives. Respondents were then asked to watch a five-minute scene extracted from a Cosby Show and a 30-second television commercial for Oldsmobile. A VHS tape playback unit was used. The program segment was shown once and the ad was shown twice.

The Cosby Show segment involves a discussion held between Dr. Huxtable (Bill Cosby), father of the house, and Elvin, a college student boyfriend of Huxtable's daughter. Elvin admits that he is perplexed about his modern-day role as a man. Cosby (Dr. Huxtable) tries to give him some fatherly advice.

The Oldsmobile ad opens with a car being driven during a misty morning in the Wall Street area of Manhattan. Since it is very early, the sound of the car door slamming shut reverberates through the "canyon" of buildings that comprise Wall Street. "Quality" is the key sales point.

After viewing each audiovisual stimulus respondents were then asked to mark whether they saw specific values supported by the content. The same 18 terminal and instrumental values were used. For ease of response, a shorter list of seven terminal and nine instrumental values were used in comparing responses to the ad. The chosen values were ones believed to be either strongly projected or almost totally non-existent in the ad, as decided by a panel of judges. Each student in both samples were asked questions about media behavior, cultural identity and perception

of TV's impact on culture.

Findings

The authors found that student samples in both countries did not significantly differ in their use of media; whether it was reading a paper, watching television, or listening to radio, records or tapes. Although, in every category Canadians tend to be greater media users (See Table 1).

In other areas, differences were noted:

--Canadians viewed news significantly less often from U.S. stations than did Americans (See Table 2).

--The Canadian sample proportionately viewed more U.S.-produced entertainment programming than the American sample (See Table 2).

--Canadians rated TV advertising less positive (See Table 3).

--Overall, Canadians felt less culturally unique than Americans (See Table 4), especially those Canadians who were heavy viewers of U.S.-produced TV programming (See Table 5).

In general, Canadians present a consistent pattern of response. Canadians who view a higher percentage of U.S.-produced TV programming exhibit a more favorable attitude toward TV programming, believe that Canada is culturally less unique, believe that Canadian culture is less worth preserving, and are less conscious of the potential for television to undermine culture and interpersonal relations (See Table 5).

Americans who watch a higher percentage of U.S.-produced TV programming also demonstrated a lowered consciousness concerning the potential harmful effect of television upon culture and interpersonal relations (See Table 5).

In terms of perceived media content values, there were essentially no differences in terminal values perceived between the Canadian sample and the United States sample (See Table 6). In ranking perceived terminal values, the top four were the same for each respondent group; both samples equally perceived "equality", "happiness", "self-respect" and "family security", respectively. Rankings for the remaining 14 were very similar for both groups (See Table 7). The striking similarities in perception of content values held true for the two groups' perceptions of instrumental values in the program segment (See Tables 8 & 9). The top four perceived instrumental values were, "helpful", "polite", "capable", and "loving", respectively.

The same pattern was found in the two types of values perceived in the ad (See Tables 10 & 11). The rankings of the seven terminal values and nine instrumental values were, in fact, precisely the same (See Table 11).

Overall, of the 36 personally held values only one -- "family security" -- was found to be statistically different between Canadians and Americans (See Tables 12 & 13).

In an attempt to test the internal validity of Rokeach's values as equivalent concepts in each country, operational definitions of seven values were devised. Respondents were

offered a choice of values in order to match the correct value to the correct operational definition. In only two of the seven cases, did less than at least three-fourths of all respondents correctly match the value with its definition (See Table 14). Thus, the internal validity of Rokeach's value system across U.S. and Canadian college student samples is supported.

Conclusion

Self-rated personal values of Canadian and American college students are strikingly similar. These similar Canadian-American personal values seemingly lead to similar media behavior, similar perceptions of values embedded in TV entertainment programming and advertising, and similar ways of rationalizing TV's negative impact on culture and personal relations. Both national respondent groups seem to be dominated by similar media-cultural environments.

These results suggest that U.S. media domination can not be rejected as an agent playing a role in Canadian acculturation. Canadian heavy viewers of U.S.-produced television seemed particularly less conscious of Canadian culture and of television's potential harm to interpersonal relations. These viewers may be either consciously attempting to become more "American" through their viewing habits; or, they may be exhibiting the subconscious acculturating effects of U.S. television viewing.

From the perspective of an open systems model (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1982) and implications from the literature, media

domination may be one of the acculturating agents, along with similar social forces (Skipper, 1975); social contacts and other interpersonal variables as well as similar social backgrounds (Payne and Caron, 1983); history (Lipset, 1985); a shared language; proximity; and, economic interrelationships. Thus, although the authors can not reject the effect of U.S. media domination, other agents cannot be discounted, nor can degree of effect be apportioned to any of them.

Findings in this research support the null hypothesis, and, therefore, the study should be replicated. Sites further from the border, samples drawn from the general population, and responses from French and minority group Canadians would help to further determine this exploratory study's external validity and generalizability.

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Table #1

Media Behavior of College Students
in Canada and the U.S.

On an average day of an average week, how much time do you spend:*	Mean Response Scores**	
	Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
Reading a newspaper	2.24	2.20
Watching TV	4.32	4.06
Listening to radio	4.54	4.28
Reading for enjoyment	2.84	2.47
Listening to records/tapes	3.73	3.16
Talking to people	5.50	5.34

* Responses ranged along a 1-6 rating scale whereas: 1= less than 15 min.; 2 = 15 min. to 1/2 hrs; 3 = 1/2 to 1 hr.; 4 = 1-2 hrs.; 5 = 2-3 hrs.; 6= more than 3 hrs.

**No significantly different results were noted at the 0.05 level or less, using t-test analysis.

Table #2

U.S. Produced TV Programming
Viewed by College Students
in Canada and the U.S.

When watching Television:*	Mean Response Scores** Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
A) What percent of your TV viewing consists of news, information, and education programming?	2.45	2.62
B) What percent of your TV new viewing is from a U.S. television station?	4.29[a]	5.05[a]
C) What percent of your entertainment TV viewing is produced in the U.S.?	5.01	4.87

* Responses ranged along a 1-6 rating scale whereas: 1=0%; 2=more than 0% to 25%; 3=more than 25% to 50%; 4=more than 50% to 75%; 5=more than 75% to almost 100%; 6=100%.

**Matching letters denote significantly different results at the 0.05 level or less, using t-test analysis.

Table #3

Attitudes Toward Television
and Progress by College Students
in Canada and the U.S.
Mean Response Scores**

Attitude Items*	Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
A) Prime-time television entertainment programs index.	20.66	21.99
B) Advertising shown on prime-time television index.	17.55[a]	20.44[a]
C) Internal-External locus of control index.	12.40	12.31
D) It is important to follow the latest trends in society.	3.68	3.43
E) Progress, in our modern industrial/consumer society, should be allowed to continue without restriction.	3.05	3.17

*Responses for the following attitude items were scored on the following scales:

A) TV index - rated on a scale of 1-10 with "1" as the most favorable response and "10" as the least favorable response, respondents rated TV on the following four polar descriptors: "good-bad", "like-dislike", "important to me-unimportant to me", "presents a lifestyle I want for myself-presents a lifestyle I don't want for myself."

B) Advertising index - same descriptors rated opposite of A; 1=least favorable-10=most favorable.

C) I-E locus of control index - rated on a scale of 1-5 with "1" being "strongly agree" and "5" being "strongly disagree", respondents rated themselves on the following four statements:
   (1) Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries.
   (2) Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.
   (3) This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the average person can do about it.
   (4) Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.

"Agreement" is the "external" response.

D) Following trends - responses ranged on a 1-5 scale whereas 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree.

E) Unrestricted progress - same as D.

**Matching letters denote significantly different results at the 0.05 level or less, using t-test analysis.

Table #4

Cultural Identity and Consciousness by College Students in Canada and the U.S.

Attitude Statement*	Mean Response Scores** Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
A) There is a unique culture in this country.	2.66[a]	1.96[a]
B) If you "agreed" with question #1): This culture is worth preserving.	1.85	1.88
C) Commercial TV content undermines the development of this country's culture.	2.80	3.04
D) Commercial TV content undermines close personal relations with friends and family.	3.34	3.35
E) Commercial TV content undermines personal relationships with others: such as acquaintances, strangers, customers, public employees, etc.	3.21	3.02

*Responses ranged along a 1-5 rating scale whereas: 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Agree; 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4=Disagree; 5=Strongly Disagree.

**Matching letters denote significantly different results at the 0.05 level or less, using t-test analysis.

Table #5

TV Viewing and Attitudes
Toward TV, Advertising, and Culture
by College Students in Canada and the U.S.
(Significant Zero-order Correlations)

	Amount of TV Viewing (↑score=↑TV viewing)		% U.S.-Produced TV Content (↑score=↑U.S. content)	
Attitude Toward:	Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)	Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
Prime-Time TV (↑score=negative attitude)	-.24 (.004)	-.40 (<.001)	-.16 (.04)	--
Prime-Time TV Advertising (↑score=positive attitude)	--	.25 (.004)	--	--
Cultural Identity:				
Unique Culture (↑score=disagree)	--	--	.20 (.01)	--
Culture Worth Preserving (↑score=disagree)	--	--	.17 (.06)	--
Cultural Consciousness:				
TV Undermines Culture (↑score=disagree)	--	.18 (.03)	.18 (.02)	.28 (.001)
TV Undermines Relations With Friends/Family (↑score=disagree)	--	--	.17 (.03)	--
TV Undermines Relations with Others (↑score=disagree)	--	.19 (.02)	.15 (.04)	.15 (.05)

Table #6

Perception of Terminal Values Supported
By Television Program Segment Viewed
by Canadian and U.S. Students

Value	% of Perceived Support	
	Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
A comfortable life	75%	70%
An exciting life	21	27
A sense of accomplishment	61	72
A world at peace	23	24
A world of beauty	17	26
Equality	88	86
Family security	78	80
Freedom	70	72
Happiness	87	86
Inner harmony	66	71
Mature love	66	57
National security	2	2
Pleasure	46	52
Salvation	7	2
Self-respect	78	81
Social recognition	47	47
True friendship	69	61
Wisdom	70	75

Table #7

Ranking of Terminal Values Perceived as Supported in Television Program Segment by Canadian and U.S. Students

Value	Overall Rank (N=248)	Canada Rank (n=130)	U.S. Rank (n=118)
Equality	1	1	1
Happiness	2	2	2
Self-respect	3	3	3
Family security	4	4	4
Wisdom	5	6	5
A comfortable life	6	5	9
Freedom	7	7	7
A sense of accomplishment	8	11	6
Inner harmony	9	9	8
True friendship	10	8	10
Mature love	11	10	11
Pleasure	12	13	12
Social recognition	13	12	13
An exciting life	14	15	14
A world of peace	15	14	16
A world of beauty	16	16	15
Salvation	17	17	17
National security	18	18	18

Table #8

Perception of Instrumental Values
Supported By Television Program
Segment Viewed By Canadian and U.S. Students

Value	% of Perceived Support	
	Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
Ambitious	42%	47%
Broadminded	78	78
Capable	83	82
Cheerful	67	66
Clean	49	56
Courageous	21	35
Forgiving	60	59
Helpful	86	86
Honest	75	81
Imaginative	37	43
Independent	81	80
Intellectual	50	56
Logical	64	63
Loving	83	81
Obedient	47	55
Polite	84	86
Responsible	71	76
Self-controlled	64	68

Table #9

Ranking of Instrumental Values Perceived as Supported in Television Program Segment by Canadian and U.S. Students

Value	Overall Rank (N=248)	Canada Rank (n=130)	U.S. Rank (n=118)
Helpful	1	1	1
Polite	2	2	2
Capable	3	3	3
Loving	4	4	4
Independent	5	5	6
Honest	6	7	5
Broadminded	7	6	7
Responsible	8	8	8
Cheerful	9	9	10
Self-controlled	10	10	9
Logical	11	11	11
Forgiving	12	12	12
Intellectual	13	13	13
Clean	14	14	14
Obedient	15	15	15
Ambitious	16	16	16
Imaginative	17	17	17
Courageous	18	18	18

Table #10

Perception of Terminal and Instrumental Values Supported By Television Ad Viewed By Canadian and U.S. Students

Value	% of Perceived Support Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
Terminal		
A comfortable life	94%	97%
A sense of accomplishment	88	87
A world at peace	25	19
A world of beauty	75	68
Equality	3	4
Inner harmony	27	26
Social recognition	94	95
Instrumental		
Ambitious	73%	71%
Broadminded	15	8
Cheerful	8	6
Forgiving	0	2
Helpful	4	3
Imaginative	51	57
Independent	54	63
Loving	2	3
Responsible	40	34

Table #11

Ranking of Terminal and Instrumental Values
Perceived as Supported in TV Ad
By Canadian and U.S. Students

Value	Overall Rank (N=248)	Canada Rank (n=130)	U.S. Rank (n=118)
Terminal			
A comfortable life	1	1	1
Social recognition	2	2	2
A sense of accomplishment	3	3	3
A world of beauty	4	4	4
Inner harmony	5	5	5
A world at peace	6	6	6
Equality	7	7	7
Instrumental			
Ambitious	1	1	1
Independent	2	2	2
Imaginative	3	3	3
Responsible	4	4	4
Broadminded	5	5	5
Cheerful	6	6	6
Helpful	7	7	7
Loving	8	8	8
Forgiving	9	9	9

Table #12

Terminal Value Ranking Comparisons
Between College Students of Canada and the U.S.

Terminal Values	Mean Rank Scores* Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
A comfortable life	7.91	8.85
An exciting life	8.33	9.55
A sense of accomplishment	8.41	9.50
A world of peace	10.08	9.44
A world of beauty	13.61	13.85
Equality	11.45	11.44
Family security	8.31[a]	6.32[a]
Freedom	7.50	7.26
Happiness	5.69	5.39
Inner harmony	9.28	9.24
Mature love	8.12	7.74
National security	14.20	14.74
Pleasure	10.19	11.30
Salvation	13.26	11.44
Self-respect	6.85	6.81
Social recognition	11.64	12.36
True friendship	6.62	6.42
Wisdom	9.35	9.10

*Matching letters denote groups significantly different at the 0.05 level or less, using t-test analysis.

Table #13

Instrumental Value Ranking Comparisons
Between College Students of Canada and the U.S.

Instrumental Values	Mean Rank Scores* Canada (n=130)	U.S. (n=118)
Ambitious	8.04	7.25
Broadminded	8.40	9.04
Capable	9.27	8.95
Cheerful	9.67	9.59
Clean	11.85	12.86
Courageous	10.71	9.58
Forgiving	9.63	9.90
Helpful	10.50	9.73
Honest	5.84	5.10
Imaginative	10.21	11.04
Independent	7.24	8.15
Intellectual	9.00	9.43
Logical	10.62	12.01
Loving	6.53	5.92
Obedient	15.00	14.46
Polite	10.76	10.69
Responsible	6.76	6.14
Self-controlled	10.54	10.99

*No significantly different results were noted at the 0.05 level or less, using t-test analysis.

Table #14

Internal Validity of Personal Value Items

Operationalization Statement for Personal Value	% Choosing Correct Value: Canada (n=130)	% Choosing Correct Value: U.S. (n=118)
1. A person who has a house, car, new furniture, and lives in a nice neighborhood ("a comfortable life").	74%	76%
2. Feeling good about yourself ("self-respect").	67%	74%
3. Someone who considers all people's ideas ("broadminded").	92%	96%
4. Helping build a new recreation center for youth ("a sense of accomplishment").	48%	54%
5. Someone who can be depended upon to get the job done ("responsible").	89%	98%
6. A person who always smiles and offers a happy hello ("cheerful").	88%	89%
7. A person who puts alot of energy in setting and achieving high goals ("ambitious").	78%	86%